

Water conservation- A must now

Water is essential for life and is abundant in nature. The population explosion and human greed have been so great that we are now working overtime to exhaust or pollute this gift of nature on a war footing. Factually, burning candles from both ends involves, on the one end, just encroaching on the water catchment areas of the water bodies, taking out groundwater, reducing water levels every year without replenishment, and in addition to these, even polluting the underground water. In many places in India, groundwater is simply non-consumable for humans. Thousands of crores have been spent and counting, but the Ganga, Yamuna, or any river in the country is becoming increasingly polluted, with some areas reduced to seasonal rivers or drains carrying city sewage. Despite much brouhaha, little has been achieved except lip service. Water conservation is not just a word; it should be our mission. PM Modi has rightly highlighted the looming danger and emphasised a pragmatic approach to handle water issues. It is not a one-day or one-month exercise but requires proper planning to get it implemented. Ancient India was much closer to mother nature than the present generation. There were open water ponds and bowlis in every nook and cranny of cities and villages, serving a dual purpose as a water source for humans and animals as well as water replenishment bodies. Humans, in their greed for land, have destroyed this natural water conservation cycle; there are no longer any ponds or bowlis. City after city, there is an acute scarcity of water, and we are simply not doing enough to reverse the slide. It is really painful to observe factories being closed because they polluted groundwater or river water. The role of various Pollution Control Boards is very much in question; they are simply not doing enough. Another factor is eating habits. Ancient India, not long ago, was a millet-consuming country, but within a few decades, we had wheat and rice as our staple diet. Rice is the most water-intensive crop; as a result, the GoI is attempting to educate the public about the advantages of millet over rice and wheat consumption. Our neighbouring Punjab is a classic case of excessive groundwater usage for rice production and industrial effluents, both of which play an adverse role in water conservation. Some methods have to be devised to turn the tables. New building laws are being framed and implemented; rainwater harvesting is a must to get permission for new buildings now. Government offices should lead by example, following the simple thumb rule that no Government building should be constructed without water conservation measures in place. City town planners must ensure similar laws for any building permits. Awareness is essential, from the classroom to the workplace. It is simply a crusade in which everyone has to actively participate. Rickety schemes must be avoided. In rural India, all three tiers of the Panchayati Raj have to play important roles. The upkeep of local ponds and bowlis must be ensured through local bodies and municipalities.

Water conservation initiatives are continuously taken up by the Central Government and covered under various schemes and programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Atal Bhujal Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Unified Building Bye Laws (UBBL) of Delhi, 2016, Model Building Bye Laws (MBBL), 2016, Urban and Regional Development Plan Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) Guidelines, 2014, etc. The Ministry of Jal Shakti has taken up a nationwide campaign, "Jal Shakti Abhiyan," for creating appropriate rainwater harvesting structures in urban and rural areas of all the districts in the country. Grants are there to take up rooftop rainwater harvesting in Government buildings like panchayats, bhawans, anganwadis, primary health centres, etc. Efforts are on; more awareness is required to make it happen.

Nasha Mukh Abhiyaan

Nasha Mukh J&K Abhiyaan is not merely a slogan but a social mission for everyone to participate in and do something to fight the devil of drugs in our UT. But it seems Government departments and the majority of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have not taken instructions regarding continuous awareness programs seriously. Substance abuse is a curse, and unless we fight it in mission mode, we are not going to defeat this devil. Misuse of parks and gardens or other Government structures for substance abuse is a common and unchallenged activity now. Under Section 47 of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPSA), every officer of the Government or elected representative is supposed to keep watch on such activities, and whosoever fails to do so is liable to punishment, but a dereliction of this duty is common. Schools, colleges, and ITIs are supposed to carry a chapter on substance abuse, but nothing of the sort has been done for the past several months. Rural areas are more affected as there are no mobile vans for spot-checking or de-addiction centres. Given the situation, the role of panchayats and Government offices is most important. Everything cannot be left to the police alone. The fight against drug abuse has to be consistent with result-oriented initiatives. Society cannot be a mute spectator to this social evil. Young minds have to be made aware of substance abuse. Without pointing out anyone, who are the most frequent abusers, is well known as a such special focus on such places and communities. Without the active participation of all, this fight can never be won. The devil of drugs thrives solely on our flaws, so we must be extra cautious to avoid such situations. A delineated and ubiquitous approach is the need of the hour. The LG Administration has rightly pointed out shortcomings, and strict instructions have been re-issued to get things back on track once again. We cannot be complacent at any time.

Life and teachings of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa

D K Pandita

Swami Sri Ramakrishna was born on 18 February 1836, in the village of Kamarpukur, in the Hooghly district of West Bengal, India, into a very poor and pious Bengali Brahmin family. He was the fourth and the youngest child of his parents. His parents, Sri Khudiram Chattopadhyaya and Mata Chandramani Devi are said to have experienced supernatural incidents and visions regarding his birth. Swami Ramakrishna was skilled with words and had an extraordinary style of preaching and instructing, which may have helped convey his ideas to even the most skeptical temple visitors. His speeches reportedly revealed a sense of joy and fun, but he was not at a loss when debating with intellectual philosophers. Philosopher Arindam Chakrabarti contrasted Ramakrishna's talkativeness with the Buddha's legendary reticence, and compared his teaching style to that of Socrates.

In Gaya, Swamiji's father had a dream in which Bhagwan Gadadhara (a form of lord Vishnu) told him that he would be born as his son. Mata Chandramani Devi is said to have had a vision of light entering her womb from the lingam in Yogidhar Shiv Mandir. In another vision following Swamiji's birth, his mother saw a strange tall person lying in the bed instead of the baby Ramakrishna. The family of Swami ji was devoted to the Hindu deity Rama (the family deity was Sri Raghubar, an epithet of Rama). Around the age of six or seven, Swami experienced his first moment of spiritual trance. One morning, while walking along the narrow ridges of a paddy field, eating some puffed rice from a small basket, he came across the sight of a flock of milky white cranes, flying against the background of heavy rain laden black clouds, which soon covered the entire sky. The ensuing sight was so beautiful that he got absorbed into it and lost all his outer consciousness, before falling down with the rice scattered all over. People nearby who saw this, came to his rescue and carried

him home.

Swami Ramakrishna was sent to the village school where he learned to read and write, but he had an aversion to arithmetic, and didn't progress beyond simple addition, multiplication and division. He read the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and other religious books with devotion. He became

proficient in making images, acting and painting. When he was fourteen years old, he started a drama group with some of his friends and left school to pursue it.

Swami Ramakrishna had practically no formal education and spoke ungrammatical Bengali with a rustic accent. Swami ji became well-versed in the Puranas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata Purana, hearing them from the wandering monks and the Kathaks a class of men in ancient India who preached and sang the Puranas.

When Swamiji was in his teens, as the family's financial position worsened, he moved to Calcutta in 1852 along with his brother to assist him in the priestly work. On Thursday, May 31, 1855 Swami Ramakrishna, was appointed by Rani Rasmani as the priest of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple and later assigned him with the task of dressing the deity of Kali. Swami Ramakrishna had amazing ways of meditating. He would put down his clothes and the sacred thread aside, and med-

itate completely naked, according to Swamiji when one thinks about God, one should be free from all attachments and the eight servitudes of "hatred, fear, shame, aversion, egoism, vanity, noble descent, and good conduct." He viewed his sacred thread as a display of the ego, of his Brahmin descent, and thus kept it aside, saying when

calling upon the Mother, one should discard all such bondages and call on Her with a focused mind. He used to put them on after the end of his meditation.

Swamiji was married to five-year-old bride, Saradamani Mukhopadhyaya (later known as Sarada Devi) was found, and the marriage was duly solemnised in 1859. He was twenty-three at this point, but this age difference for marriage was typical for nineteenth century rural Bengal. When Sarada Devi was fourteen, and Ramakrishna thirty two he became a very influential figure in Sarada's life, and she became a strong follower of his teachings. After the marriage, Sarada stayed at Jayrambati and joined Swami Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar at the age of eighteen. By the time his bride joined him, Ramakrishna had already embraced the monastic life of a sannyasi, the marriage was never consummated. Ramakrishna regarded Sarada Devi as the Divine Mother in person, addressing her as the Holy Mother, and it was by this name that she was known to Ramakrishna's disciples. Sarada Devi outlived Ramakrishna by thirty-four years and played an

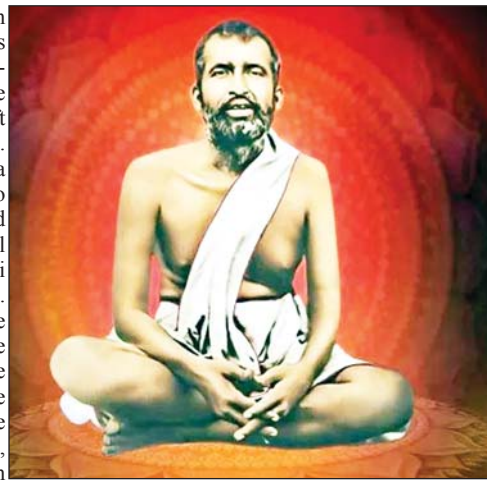
important role in the nascent religious movement.

Swami Ramakrishna grew up practicing Bhakti towards Lord Rama and his duties as a priest at the Dakshineswar temple led him to practice worship of Mother Kali. While serving as a temple priest at Dakshineswar, Ramakrishna would encounter various itinerant sadhus who would visit his place and stay there for a while. Practicing their own modes of worship, several of them initiated Ramakrishna into various schools of Hinduism.

He would meditate in the Panchavati (a wooded and secluded area of the Dakshineswar Temple grounds), go to the Kali temple to offer flowers to the Mother, and wave incense to the assorted deities and religious figures, whose pictures hung in his room.

During his last days, he was looked after by his monastic disciples and Sarada Devi. Ramakrishna was advised by the doctors to keep the strictest silence, but ignoring their advice, he incessantly conversed with visitors. According to traditional accounts, before his death, Ramakrishna transferred his spiritual powers to Vivekananda, and assured him of his avataraic status. Requesting other monastic disciples to look upon Vivekananda as their leader, Ramakrishna asked Vivekananda to look after the welfare of the disciples, saying, "keep my boys together", and asked him to "teach them". Ramakrishna's condition gradually worsened, and he died in the early morning hours of 16 August 1886 at the Cossipore garden house. His last word, on one account was "ma", while another states he uttered thrice, the word "Kali", before passing away. After the death of their master, the monastic disciples led by Vivekananda formed a fellowship at a half-ruined house at Baranagar near the river Ganges, with the financial assistance of the householder disciples. This became the first Math or monastery of the disciples who constituted the first Ramakrishna Order.

BIRTHDAY SPECIAL



Legitimize "We the people"

B L Saraf

Ever since August the 5th, 2019 constitutional development which resulted in abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A an unprecedented phenomenon has been unfolding in J&K that has had the tendency to relegate its subjects to the margins. Jury is open, is it one of the collateral damages (if one can say so) or the unintended consequence of the development? In fact the game started in June 2018 when all of a sudden the PDP-BJP coalition Government was given a good bye and the state put under Governor's rule. The arrangement continues till day.

One of the major after effects of these developments has been the relegation of the class 1 state - built by the Dogra rulers with their sweat and blood whose territory extended up to Tibet in North and Afghanistan in North West - to a mere Union Territory. Next, in the aftermath of 5th August constitutional changes the whole Valley was shut down and cut off from the outside world. Political activists and the leaders of any significance were confined to the place with all political activity coming to a grinding halt. Later on though some relaxation was given but J&K till now has no popular Government that would emanate from an elected Legislative Assembly. People have very little say in the matters of governance. Law enforcing agencies were let loose, mostly, on the persons deemed inconvenient to the powers that be in Delhi. Then bulldozer appeared on the scene to flatten the 'alleged manipulators' turning, in the process, many places of the UT into rubble. To an independent observer it would mean that people residing JK have been generally living by the underhand means. It is, however, a known fact that many political big wigs of the time and resourceful

men / women did garner valuable public property for personal leisure and pleasure. Therefore, it is no body's case that the wrong doers should be let off. Let them face the might of law. But it can't be in a way as to show that the UT is inhabited by the "crooks." Certainly, there shouldn't be the whole sale de legitimization of the people.

It goes against the grain of our constitution which puts "People" in a grand focus while pre-

parts of the country, should be treated as citizens and not subjects. After all, J & K residents too are included in "We The People" mentioned in the Preamble of our Book of Governance.

The legitimacy of the system or the citizens is based entirely upon institutional practice and the trust state is able to produce. Once trust goes missing - as one unfortunately gets the impression that it is happening in the UT - people by and large stand disempowered and helpless. It

The powers that be in Delhi go on stressing the fact that in J&K democracy is visible and functional at the village level. Reference is made to the elected local bodies. That may be the case but elected local bodies is no substitute for the elected legislative Assembly.

scribing a code of conduct to run the state business and govern the country. Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud has put it aptly when he, while addressing first convocation ceremony of the Maharashtra Law Institute University in Nagpur, characterized preamble of the "a short but weighty part of the constitution which stated that "We the people of India give ourselves this Constitution." He went on to say that the constitution marked the transition of people of India from the status of subjects to the status of citizens". So, the UT residents, like of other

isn't good for the UT nor for the great and magnificent nation like India.

The impression must be dispelled and process of ignoring people should stop. The first thing that can be done in this regard is to have elections to constitute the legislative Assembly and give people a chance to have their own Government. The Supreme Court's approval of the delimitation process may give an impetus to the election process. Few days back, Home Minister Amit Shah told a news agency that he could say with satisfaction that terror incidents in Kashmir

have reduced drastically after abrogation of Art 370. A record number of tourists are visiting the Valley. Well that gives solid a reason for holding Assembly elections without any further delay.

The powers that be in Delhi go on stressing the fact that in J&K democracy is visible and functional at the village level. Reference is made to the elected local bodies. That may be the case but elected local bodies is no substitute for the elected legislative Assembly. Here, we are reminded of Gen Ayub Khan's "Basic Democracy" concept which he championed in Pakistan when he was at the helm, in 1960s. He touted the "Basic Democrats" as true representatives of the people mandated to rule the country. But the hollowness of the concept and the structure didn't allow it to stand and thus fell flat as fast as it had been erected. While not discounting their need these local bodies, because of their limited reach and lack of functional and financial autonomy, can't be a substitute for an elected Assembly. Elected Assembly may empower people to a large extent and bring them back to the political and administrative reckoning.

Home Minister has expressed wish to have a new leadership in the UT which he feels will come up from the local bodies. And in the process, he prophesied, the old and traditional leadership in Kashmir will get dislodged. Does J&K need a new leadership and jettison the old one is a matter better left to the people to decide. Election to the Assembly is the only mode to test their preference. Wishes, howsoever pious, won't count much.

In the Amrit Kaal let the people in J & K have a taste of Amrit of democracy and enjoy their Government, in new Avataar or the old one.

(The author is former Principal District & Sessions Judge)

Mother Language - An effective tool to transform education

M Ahmad

Languages are the most important way of keeping our culture alive as well education. Mother's tongue is defined as the first language a child is exposed to from the time of birth and this language is first naturally acquired by humans and is called mother tongue. It is associated with the language that a child's parent use to communicate with them, also called the native tongue. Mother tongue is the language that a person has grown up speaking from his/her early childhood. It is therefore the medium of communication that a person is most familiar with. This familiarity can be used for providing education, though this is not what happens.

Mother tongue education refers to any form of schooling which uses the language or languages that children are most familiar with, in order to help them learn. This is usually the language that children speak at home with their family. The 'mother tongue' does not have to be the language spoken by the mother. Children can and often do speak more than one or even two languages at home. For example, they may speak one language with their mother, another with their father and a third with their grandparents. Other terms used are home language, first language or heritage language. The government of India introduced the National Education Policy. It is the biggest reform in the field of education since the National Education Policy, 1986. The National Education Policy, 2020 tries to bring changes in many areas in education and one of them is the medium of instruction in which education will be provided in primary schools. This policy states that the mother tongue will be the medium of instruction up to class 5 in all schools. A child understands his mother tongue and hence if he/she is instructed in that language itself, his transition to school education is smooth and easy. Even UNESCO has recommended that classes be taught in the community's mother tongue during the early years of primary school so that students can fully learn to read and write, and during this time they also are introduced to early mathematical concepts and other academic subjects.

Advantages of mother tongue in education are numerous. Mother tongue makes it easier for children to pick up and learn other languages. It develops a child's personal, social and cultural identity. Using mother tongue helps a child develop their

critical thinking and literacy skills. Children learning in mother tongue enjoy school more and learn faster due to feeling comfortable in their environment. Self-esteem is higher for children learning in mother tongue. Parent child interaction increases as the parent can assist with homework. Research shows that education in the mother tongue is a key factor for inclusion and quality learning, and it also improves learning outcomes and academic performance. This is crucial, especially in primary school to avoid knowledge gaps and increase the speed of learning and comprehension. And most importantly, multilingual educa-

their socialization. Mother tongue provides children strong education base and that makes it easier for the child to learn other languages later as well. So children must maintain their first language when they begin schooling because, at the time when children develop their mother tongue, simultaneous development of a host of other essential skills such as critical thinking and literacy skills takes place in them.

Mother tongue is vital in framing the thinking and emotions of people, therefore it causes the comprehensive development of a child. Learning in ones' own language will help the student express

making which has been long recommended by Dr Yashpal Sharma. This will bring the content in textbooks closer to children and make them understand the syllabus better. Thus targeting mechanical learning. Education in mother tongue will help the students in getting a better sense of their cultural background and therefore helps him/her progress in life his/her roots intact.

The importance of mother tongue is so important for child education because many experts argue that foreign language education is not always the best. If the child is taught in a language that the child doesn't understand, then comprehension doesn't occur and results in rote memorization. Therefore, it is a healthy approach to learning for the child to teach second languages with first languages because they can of language to express their thought. This can improve learning, increase student participation and reduce the number of dropouts. Furthermore, children with a strong mother tongue found it easier to pick up a second language and develop their literacy skills. The research covers many links between a child's development and their mother tongue and they found that children, who learn two or even more languages, have a deeper understanding of cultural identity is also easily adapted. Language and mother tongue play a huge role in the development of child personal, social and cultural identity and child who has a strong mother tongue foundation equips well to learning additional languages, as well deeper understanding of themselves and their place within society, along with an increased sense of wellbeing and this advantage cannot be overstated. The use of mother tongue in the early education of child helps in facilitating learning, it serves as motivation as the child moves from the known, which is the mother tongue to the unknown which is the second language or target language.

Providing primary education in the mother tongue as now mandated in the National Education Policy, 2020, is the step in the right direction and if implemented in true spirit will enhance the learning capabilities of the students and making education a wholesome experience while in the way also resolving the issue of school drop-outs. However, there is still a long way to go before guaranteeing all learners their right to education in their mother language.

"Imparting education to children in vernacular languages shall encourage creativity and enable children easy grasp of the subject.".....A.P.J. Abdul Kalam



tion based on the mother tongue empowers all learners to fully take part in society. It fosters mutual understanding and respect for one another and helps preserve the wealth of cultural and traditional heritage that is embedded in every language around the world.

Learning the mother tongue is very important for overall child's development and being fluent in the mother tongue is another factor for education. The first language that a child learns right from birth, plays a crucial role in education for a wide array of reasons and it's also actually built up a child's social, personal, and cultural identity. Many child physiologists are indicate that having a strong mother tongue foundation for any child leads to a much better understanding of their education as well as a more positive attitude towards

himself/herself better. This will thus make school learning two ways communication between teacher and students. Understanding the subject matter would boost the confidence of the student and propel him/her to continue with his/her schooling thus lowering the drop-out rate. Educating children in their mother tongue will also build a strong home-school partnership in their learning. Parents will be able to participate in their child's education and make the experience of learning for the students more wholesome. It will also benefit the primary school teachers as many of them find it difficult to express themselves in English and hence are not able to transfer as much knowledge as they would like to, thus creating a knowledge deficit. Providing primary education in mother tongue will also decentralize the task of textbook